

## **INTRODUCTION**

Today's hearing will focus on understanding the scope of what is wrong at the CDC so that we can begin to fix it.

This is not about settling scores or villainizing the CDC, it's about accountability.

Accountability for children kept out of school... who are dealing with mental, social, and emotional health issues...

Small businesses owners who watched their life's work dry up... for people who lost their jobs because of vaccine mandates...

The CDC's response to the COVID-19 pandemic created a crisis in confidence in the agency.

The crisis made it overwhelmingly clear that the CDC has serious, foundational problems and the roots, in many cases, span multiple administrations.

## **RECKONING WITH THE SCOPE OF CDC'S COVID-19 FAILURES**

No doubt that a virus as transmissible as SARS-CoV-2 was always going to be difficult. But in the earliest days of the pandemic, the CDC's faulty test kits sealed our fate.

Without testing we could not effectively slow the spread of the virus when cases amounted to just a few embers.

People also counted on the CDC to provide timely and clear guidance based on the best available science to keep themselves and their loved ones safe.

Time and again CDC's guidance was neither timely nor clear nor based on the best available science.

Rather, CDC's guidance reflected the agency's preferred policy outcomes or political considerations.

At its worst, CDC released guidance that was influenced by teachers' unions and was used to keep schools closed.

At the time the CDC issued its school re-opening guidance, many schools that had been open safely for months would have had to close.

Our children are paying a terrible price academically, physically, and emotionally for the CDC's shortcomings.

Bad science in CDC guidance, when used to justify mandates, destroyed lives.

CDC public communications on COVID-19 vaccines were just as bad. Simply put, CDC overpromised when it should have known better.

CDC leadership told the public that vaccines prevented transmission while the agency was receiving reports of break through infections among the vaccinated.

CDC denied the existence of adverse events while it was receiving reports of post-vaccination myocarditis in young men.

The CDC's decades of experience running mass vaccination programs should have prepared it to manage the administration of COVID-19 vaccines.

The CDC knows only 30 to 40% of people get an annual flu shot... that vaccine hesitancy is a real issue.

Planning to end the pandemic by achieving a 100% vaccination rate was never realistic.

The CDC also knows that vaccines can lose effectiveness over time.

When the CDC told the public that the COVID-19 vaccines would be 100% effective at preventing both transmission and illness, it set itself up to break the public's trust.

## **THE PATH FORWARD**

It is going to be a long road to rebuild this trust—and the agency cannot go it alone.

Many of the CDC's COVID-19 failures have their roots in longstanding problems at the agency.

Before CDC's COVID-19 test kit failed in 2020, there were problems with the agency's zika test in 2016.

Two years after the COVID-19 test kit failures, the CDC produced a faulty mpox test in 2022.

The CDC needs to address its failures with openness and, frankly, humility.

I am deeply worried that CDC's insular, academic culture will prevent it from learning the right lessons.

Outgoing Director Walensky launched a reorganization of the CDC. Whether it survives her departure is unclear.

Whether the reorganization would address CDC's foundational problems is also unclear.

The CDC has refused to provide this Committee with the information needed to independently assess the reorganization. That must change and it must change fast.

## **CONCLUSION**

I'll close by noting that Congress is not without blame for the current state of the CDC.

The CDC has never been authorized, Congress has never – in a single voice – told the CDC what its mission is and is not. That must be fixed...

... especially as we see the CDC lose sight of its mission by embracing agendas—oftentimes political—outside this scope of being a trusted infectious disease agency.

This Committee's majority is committed to working on CDC reform.

Today's hearing, Dr. Miller-Meeks' RFI, and our ongoing oversight of CDC's reorganization are the first steps towards getting the agency back on track.

Thank you to our witnesses, I look forward to your testimony.